DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 318 938 CG 022 484

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TITLE Dual Career Couples in the University: Policies and Problems.
PUB DATE Mar 90
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented an the Annual Conference of the National Association for Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors (74th, Nashville, TN, March 21-25, 1990).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Administration; *College Faculty; *Dual Career Family; *Family Life; Higher Education; *Professional Personnel; Stress Variables

ABSTRACT

Many large corporations are proactively developing hiring and personnel management policies to accommodate dual career couples employed by them. Neither the public sector in general nor universities in particular have developed such policies and little is known about what universities are doing to accommodate dual career couple applicants or employees. To examine this issue, questionnaires were mailed to a random sample of American Society for Public Administration members employed in the private sector, government, and universities. The questionnaire was designed to examine attitudes about dual career couples in the work place and to determine what hiring and promotion policies affect dual career couples. Findings from 877 respondents revealed no significant difference in attitudes held about dual career couples among persons employed in universities, the public, or the private sector. The findings suggest that dual career couple members employed in universities are most often treated just like other employees; their family situation is rarely taken into consideration in hiring, promotion, and transfer decisions. Although many universities permit married people to work together, few encourage the practice. Universities that want to be on the cutting edge of hiring and retaining the best and the brightest can begin by targeting dual career couples and by creating a receptive environment for dual career couples. (NB)

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DUAL CAREER COUPLES IN THE UNIVERSITY: POLICIES AND PROBLEMS

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A pattern in the university workforce is the increasing numbers of women in both administrative and faculty positions. A puzzle which many of them must solve is how to manage the demands of profession and family in a dual career couple relationship. Pieces of the puzzle include, at least: women's own competencies and aspirations; a cultural heritage which often still implies that a "woman's place" is not in the professional workforce; the values and expectations about family responsibilities that both men and women bring to a dual career marriage; and the usually inflexible organizational policies which exacerbate the dilemmas of balancing work and family demands.

Men and women today are in the midst of what one author has called a "stalled revolution", because of the conflict between the realities of the working world with traditional values and organizational policies. The research reported here sheds light on the problems dual career couples in the university face. It also discusses university policies on hiring and promotion which affect dual career couples. After a review of the literature in these two areas, this paper will report on the results of a nationwide survey of public administration professionals of which 155 respondents (18 percent) are employed in universities.

Dual Career Couples Defined

The dual career couple is composed of two professional people in a marital or significant relationship in which both partners pursue a "career" rather than a "job". Each career encompasses a lifelong work characterized by strong commitment, personal growth, and increasing levels of responsibility (Leavitt, 1983). This definition of dual career couple (DCC) assumes that both members are highly trained, committed to career advancement, and receive financial remuneration for their career activities. Thus, the term does not include a couple in which one member makes a career of homemaking; nor does it include the couple where one partner is employed out of economic necessity, with a readiness to leave the job if demands of family or the other partner prove too excessive.

A number of possible DCC employment scenarios can be identified. Newgren (1987) lists four possibilities: the same organization, different units; the same organization, same unit or same chain of command; different companies in unrelated industries; and different companies in the same industry, which may be major competitors.

One can easily adapt Newgren's list to the university setting:

1. Same university, different college.
2. Same university, different department within college.
3. Different universities in same area.
4. University and some organization in same area.
5. Different universities in different geographical areas.
6. University and some other organization in different areas.

Each situation in this list carries with it a concomitant set of assets and problems for both the couple members and the employing organizations.

Problems Faced by Dual Career Couples

In the dual career family, for better or worse, the demands of career are given equal importance to the demands of family by both partners. In traditional families - the families most of us remember from our childhood - a man has placed career goals above family (in the sincere and often correct belief) that by succeeding in his career he is truly putting the needs of his family foremost. A traditional woman, on the other hand, has placed family demands (housekeeping, child rearing, errand running) first, and taken employment outside the home only to "help out".

Dual career couples share the balancing act of family vs. career with all families where both principals are employed outside the home. Dual career couples, however, must deal with other, more demanding dimensions. They must reconcile the "myth of separate worlds" (Kanter, 1977) with two antagonistic realities. Careers impact family relationships, and family responsibilities impact careers. They must confront and conquer the competing requirements of work and family in two arenas: hers and his.

Just as the traditional model of family has placed women in the home as caretaker and support of the man, the traditional model of job commitment has encouraged the organization and family to compete for the time and energy of the individual (Orthner and Pittman, 1986). Traditionally organizations dealt (whether consciously or unconsciously, I'm not sure) with this adverserial relationship by coopting the female couple member. The organization literally got a "two for the price of one"

deal. With DCC's, this cooptation is impossible. So is the "2 for 1" deal, and both careers may suffer because of it.

DCC members in the university also experience the same problems and stresses faced by DCC members in other organizations. These include: role overload (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976 and 1978); "normative dilemmas" of the conflict between personal beliefs and societal norms (Amatea and Cross, 1983); lack of social support systems (Skinner, 1980); and role conflicts (Hall and Hall, 1979). All of these, of course, lead to increased stress (Rapoport, 1978 and Hothschild, 1989).

A major concern of DCC members is the restriction their personal relationship places on job choices and upward mobility (Gross, 1980). In the early stages of either's career, when they have similar professional needs, they may experience conflicting occupational path alternatives (Hall and Hall, 1978). For instance, a newly graduated couple may find that one of them receives the ideal job offer hundreds, even thousands, of miles from the other's offer. In a traditional relationship, she would follow him. In a DCC relationship, a reassessment of values and priorities is required.

Whatever the decision made, it will be a "damned if you do and damned if you don't" resolution. If they take the far-apart jobs, they lose emotional support even as they have to contend with additional everyday hassles. The wife may feel guilty for abdicating "wifely commitments". The husband may feel "deprived" because she has abdicated (Gross, 1980). As a result, the couple's initial sense of shared partnership is called into question. The most typical way that couples resolve this dilemma is to consider the husband's career as "most important" (Holmstrom, 1972; Heckman, 1977; Hothschild, 1989).

Some couples, however, have opted for a "commuter marriage" in which they maintain separate households and see one another when they can (Gerstel, 1977 and 1978). Gross (1980) concludes that an academic career facilitates the accommodation to DCC's who live apart better than other professions. Even when DCC members receive job offers in their chosen career area by the same university, problems can occur, however. DCC's who work in the same organization may find their career advancement opportunities limited. Public universities are constrained by state anti-nepotism rules which forbid one spouse to supervise another, or to be in a higher position in the same chain of command (Reed, 1988 and 1989).

Another problem can occur as a result of university recruitment. Universities (both public and private) have been known to recruit a woman by offering her qualified spouse a position. The couple relocates. Typically, as the recruit, she "fits" that university milieu. He doesn't. She is reappointed. His contract is not renewed. Now the couple's original dilemma is compounded by both the emotional and financial costs of the move and the termination (Bailey, 1989).

With all the potential problems, one wonders why people ever try to manage a DCC relationship, but try they do. The number of DCC's is growing. In 1982, in 62 percent of the married couples both husband and wife worked. Of that group, 10 to 14 percent were dual career (Spain and Nock, 1984). By 1983 (the last year for which data are available), that percent had risen to twenty (Reed, 1988). If the percent of DCC's has continued to increase at the rate of 6 percent a year, we can now expect that almost half of the work force is composed of dual career couples. In fact, one futurist

speculates that by the year 1995 nine out of every ten married couples will be dual earner couples (Winfield, 1988).

Organizational Policies that Affect Dual Career Couples

The literature about organizational policies that affect dual career couples can literally be divided into the categories of "fantasy" and "reality" (Reed, 1989). The "fantasy" literature talks about working conditions as they ought to be. It discusses flex-time and flexible benefits, child care, and parental leave. It explains how relocation assistance can facilitate career moves. It is most often found in journals related to marriage and family counseling and women's studies.

The "reality" literature is descriptive, and often depressing. It is usually found in the literature of administration and management. One focus of the literature written in management journals concerns the restricted mobility of DCC members and how this negatively impacts relocation decisions made by the organization. (Mathews and Mathews, 1980; Mathews, 1984; Maynard and Zawacki, 1979). Whether they are employed in the same or different organizations, DCC members are less likely to accept transfers than are other employees. For the DCC member, unless some relocation assistance is offered to the spouse, transfers, even those which are accompanied by promotion, are often refused. Because of the dilemma this creates for upper management, more and more firms in the private sector are offering relocation assistance (Gilmore and Fannin, 1980).

Another focus of management literature, particularly in the area of government employment (which includes public colleges and universities), is the issue of nepotism when both spouses are employed by (or seeking employment in the same organization.

> Both anti-nepotism rules and merit system regulations seek to protect the competency of the work force, yet, paradoxically, qualified job applicants are often turned away, and valuable employees are frequently transferred or even fired because of anti-nepotism policies. Poor performance is rarely the issue in such cases. Rather, most organizations restrict married co-workers to some degree because of an assumption that the family is a potentially disruptive influence in the workplace. (Reed, 1989)

Related to the nepotism issue, but distinct from it is the documented belief held by many administrators that married couples bring their problems to work, and, by so doing, interrupt productivity (Bierman and Fisher, 1984). One survey of university administrators reported a real ambivalence amoung university administrators toward the hiring of DCC's (Pingree, et al, 1978) for this very reason.

A number of large corporations are proactively developing hiring and personnel management policies to accommodate the DCC's in their employ. A thorough discussion of the policies developed by the private sector can be found in Sekaran (1986). Neither the public sector in general nor universities in particular appear to have followed this lead, nor do most of us know what is being done by the university community to accommodate DCC applicants or employees. The research reported here begins to remedy that.

Methodology

In the Spring of 1989 a four page questionnaire was mailed to a random sample of the membership of the American Society for Public Administration. This group was chosen because its members are employed in the private sector, at all levels of government, and in universities. Usable questionnaires were received in May, 1989 from 877 respondents, or 49 percent of those contacted. Thus the figures reported here are accurate within $\pm$ 4 percent.[1]

The survey was designed to answer two questions:

1. What are the attitudes about dual career couples in the work place?

2. What hiring and promotion policies particularly impact DCC's?

Findings

UNIVERSITY EMPLOYED RESPONDENTS

People from every state and every size of city returned the survey. The typical university-employed respondent was male, between the ages of 31 and 50. He is a faculty member who has been in his position more than 10 years. He is married, and is a member of a DCC.

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[1] When a population size of 18,000 yields a sample size of between 566 and 964, results have a reliability of $\pm$ 4 percent (Welch and Comer, 1983:158).

Only 21.2 percent of the university employed respondents were female. Of that group 73 percent are faculty and the rest are in administrative positions. Seventy seven percent of the women university employees are married, as are 79 percent of the men. The men, however, less often had employed spouses and were less likely to be members of a DCC. Only 69 percent of the male university employed respondents reported having an employed spouse, as compared to 97.5 percent of the women. Of the men in universities, only 57.5 percent were members of a DCC, as compared to 88.2 percent of the women.

Male members of DCC's fared better than women, however. Only 2.7 percent of the male DCC members reported that their spouses had separate living arrangements to accommodate a career, while 14.3 percent of the academic women had to live separately from spouses.

At a statistically significant difference of .0002, university employed DCC's in general were more likely to have a spouse who is unable to find satisfactory work in the same geographical area, than were those employed in other sectors.

ATTITUDES ABOUT DCC'S

Whether a respondent worked in a university, the public or the private sector, there was no significant difference in the attitudes held about dual career couples. In fact, there seemed to be a shared ignorance, with respondents much more likely to respond "don't know" to questions regarding their attitudes about DCC's. Statements in the survey instrument which attempted to capture attitudes toward DCC's are shown in

Table 1, along with the percent of respondents who agreed, disagreed, or didn't know. Table 2 reflects the way DCCs are treated in the university setting.

(Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here.)

A statistically significant difference (.00001) exists between how DCC members and those who consider themselves to be "two-wage-earner" couples view their lives, with 40 percent of DCC members stating their lives are "more difficult" because of their DCC role. When married respondents answered the question: "Do you think that being a member of a dual career couple makes your life more difficult?" there was no statistically significant difference between the male and female response, nor between places of employment. An interesting difference in their comments about those difficulties appears, however, and indicates that women may experience their dual career membership differently than do men.

Many male members tend to view the difficulties as positive. The gist of male comments on the question, "Do you think that being a member of a dual career couple makes your life more difficult?" is captured in the following quotations:

"Also more interesting; would not have it any other way."

"But it's worth it!"

"I can't imagine myself married to someone without a career of her own. Life would be less difficult..., but probably less happy, too."

One male was concerned about "less time for family, e.g. kids & 'our time'". Several other men see the biggest difficulty as restricted mobility. One man worries about child care.

Comments of women, on the other hand, reflect a concern about the difficulties of child rearing and the strain on relationships. They report situations such as:

"I am divorced, in part, because my career goals and my former spouse's conflicted."

"Managing children is very difficult...If you are dealing with elderly parents, as we are, the time is even more hectic."

"We've both gone through some tough times."

"My ex-husband and I were in the same career/same office and it worked out well - except I ended up doing all his work, too, while he had an affair with our secretary!"

"I do not think working in the same organization as my husband would have a positive influence on my marriage...I would become overly concerned about my husband's progress."

Informal conversations with university employees and their spouses in traditional marriages elicited an entirely different set of responses about career roles.

> "My job is to help my husband. It's 'publish or perish' you know. He can't get his research done and do everything else he has to do. So my job is typing his papers and seeing that he has a quiet place to work at home".

"I wish I could work full time, but my husband doesn't want me to be cleaning or going to the store on weekends. I work part time so we can spend our weekends relaxing."

"We've just got back from a year's sabbatical. We loved it and I'll be glad when we retire."

Attitudes about DCC members in the university show more confusion than anything else. More respondents were uncertain about their opinions, than were able to take a strong stand for or against dual career couples. What does emerge, however, is a clear picture of a career for each member in which each must "go it alone" rather than have the support of a traditional spouse. A lament frequently heard in the halls of academia from both male and female DCC members is "I need a wife."

Young or newly hired faculty who are DCC members have the same or greater demands on their time than do their senior colleagues. Who in the family meets those demands has not typically been a concern of university administrators. Yet, faculty men in traditional marriages have often had a "two person career" rather than have lived in a "two career family".

As dual career couple members compete for tenure, promotion, and recognition within the university, they must literally accomplish alone what single colleagues accomplish in concert with the aid of supportive spouses. This go-it-alone phenomenon has been characterized as "inherently depleting" (Hunt and Hunt, 1977), both personally and professionally, because "it has the effect of withdrawing full-time domestic support

from both the career-oriented husband and wife in these marriages, each of whom, individually, needs such support" (Amatea and Cross, 1983).

Certainly conflicts do exist in dual career marriages - conflicts about which our parents could never have dreamed. Perhaps these conflicts are what prompted 43 percent of those employed in universities to report that dual career couple status makes their life more difficult than the lives of colleagues in other lifestyle situations.

UNIVERSITY HIRING AND PROMOTION POLICIES

In 93.5 percent of the universities represented in this survey, spouses can work in the same department and in the same university. Someone with hiring authority has to remember to discuss this possibility, however, for 51 percent of the respondents report that they cannot advocate for hiring their spouse. In some universities, administrators do proactively recruit spouses.

A problem may arise for each DCC member employed by the same university, however, if either wants to move into administration. In 42.9 percent of the universities, one spouse is prohibited from supervising another. Thus, while each spouse can be hired and advance through the professorial ranks, neither may be eligible for promotion into administration.

This limitation on advancement is especially important to know, for the university setting appears to be the most friendly toward DCC's, both individually and as a team. In 16 percent of the universities represented in this survey, a job can be created for the spouse of a desirable candidate. This creation might not be such a bad idea, because 41.6 percent of the university-employed respondents reported that their institution has

lost a highly qualified desirable employee because a spouse could not find a job in the same area.

The research reported here supports the Gross (1980) conclusion that an academic career has another advantage over other career situations. It can accommodate a commuter marriage under certain conditions. When an academic DCC member works within a half day's drive of the other, and is able to schedule teaching and office responsibilities in clusters of time such as Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, then, "yes", an academic career and DCC membership work well. If, however, the geographic separation is greater than a four hour drive, and the job requirements dictate daily appearance at the job site, academics face the same frustrations as any other DCC in a commuter marriage.

Statements in the survey instrument which attempted to capture policies and procedures which affect dual career couples are shown in Table 2, along with the percent of universities where the policies exist, don't exist, and the percent of rerspondents who simply didn't know. Once again, one is struck with the high percentage of "don't know" responses.

(Insert Table 2 about here)

Discussion

The university workplace contains a high percent of dual career couple members about whom little is known, and, for whom, there is little accomodation. Although many universities permit married people to work together, few encourage the practice.

Fully 45 percent of the respondents report that rules prohibiting spouses working together can be waived upon appeal to a higher authority. Yet, little assistance is given to them if one member of a working couple is eligible for promotion. Herein lies a problem for dual career couple members who may make their choice of position, even career, based on a perceived receptivity to their unique relationship, then find that policies do not exist to foster the career development of both. They are likely to find that one or the other member is unable to advance because one cannot supervise the other.

Dual career couple members are most often treated just like other employees, which means that their family situation is rarely taken into consideration in hiring, promotion, and transfer decisions. Because it is not, many universities have lost at least one top notch employee.

Although the university appears to be a less hostile environment for dual career couples than do other employment sectors, this does not seem to be by design. Fully 45 percent of respondents admit that they "don't know" about the dual career couples in their university. It is little wonder that existing literature indicates that management practices have not kept pace with this emerging lifestyle. People cannot plan for conditions they do not know exists.

Dual career couple members are pioneers. Their lifestyles are not issues with which traditional university administration has dealt. Yet, with their numbers increasing yearly, concerned universities which want to retain competent employees will need to make a concientious effort to develop policies which are conducive to dual career member recruitment and retention.

Traditional university management has maintained a clear distinction between the spheres of work and family (Reed, 1989). Most universities represented in this research maintain this separation at two levels: The first level is the official policies which prohibit family members in the same organization or department. The second is benign neglect which treats dual career couple members just like everyone else, and, in so doing, forces many of them to resign to find work where their spouse can also find work, or to take an unsatisfactory job to be near a spouse.

Information about DCC lifestyles and career expectations may mean that managing a dual career workforce requires a different set of values, assumptions and skills than are generally possessed by university administrators who tend to have and operate under a set of anti-nepotism rules, whether real or imagined.

Many who are members of dual career couples as well as those who are conducting research on them are excited about the drive and synergy which they generate. They believe the DCC presence in an organization can enhance productivity and facilitate organizational goal attainment. Some scholars believe that in the organization of the future, the presence of the DCC will be the rule, rather than the exception, and that it will be difficult to attract and retain qualified, competent professionals if satisfactory employment is not available for their spouses.

Conclusions

Universities which want to be on the cutting edge of hiring and retaining the best and the brightest can begin by targeting dual career couples. They can actively recruit dual career couple members by putting statements of encouragement for DCC's in job vacancy announcements. They can create a receptive environment by advertising the broadest range of jobs available at all times. They can provide relocation and job-search assistance for spouses as a part of routine recruitment activities.

Universities can develop employee friendly policies like child-care and parental leave. They can provide support systems by identifying DCCs and giving them the opportunity to seek one another out, or develop a DCC mentoring system. They can establish training programs for faculty, department chairs, and other administrators which contribute to a consciousness raising about both the potential contributions of the DCC, and about their unique problems.

The DCCs in the university workforce present an unparalleled opportunity for those who are concerned about the retention of top notch professionals. Research indicates that, once hired in positions where both are successful, DCC members show a deep commitment to the organization which hired them and are less likely to leave it. They know the problems they as a family will encounter if one member chooses to move and they tend to prefer to stay in the place where they can both grow and develop professionally. Universities which capitalize on this opportunity can't help but benefit.

Table 1

Attitudes Toward Dual Career Couples

STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW
Spouses employed in the same organization have more marital strife.	11.7 %	47.5 %	40.8 %
Spouses employed in the same organization have greater productivity.	15.7	31	53.3
Spouses employed in the same organization team up against other employees.	11.9	50.6	37.5
Performance evaluations are more difficult when two employees are married.	42.1	36	21.9
Spouses employed in the same organization are just like any other employees.	50.1	38.2	11.7
I would advise a young person to seek employment in the same organization as his or her spouse.	10.4	64.1	25.5
I would advise a young person to marry someone in the same profession.	22.3	43.7	34

Table 2

Policies Which Affect Dual Career Couples

STATEMENT	Policy Applies	Does Not Apply	DON'T KNOW
Spouses are prohibited from working in same university.	1.9 %	93.5 %	4.5 %
Spouses are prohibited from working in same department	12.3	74.8	12.9
An employee cannot supervise his or her spouse.	42.9	22.1	35.1
If two employees marry, one must resign.	1.3	8.3	10.4
An administrator cannot hire his or her spouse.	40.9	14.3	44.8
An employee cannot advocate the hiring of a spouse.	20.1	31.8	48.1
If one spouse is transferred, priority is given to assisting the other spouse.	12.7	52	35
When recruiting a new, highly qualified candidate, a job will be created for that candidate's spouse.	16.1	64.4	19.5
The policy on hiring spouses is entirely at the discretion of whoever is in charge.	23.2	48.4	28.4
My organization has sometimes hired dual career couples then been sorry because one spouse was not as competent as the other.	12.4	41.2	46.4

Table 3

Treatment of Dual Career Couples

STATEMENT	Policy Applies	Does Not Apply	DON'T KNOW
My organization encourages dual career couples to work in it.	18.2	50.6	31.2
My organization has lost at least one top notch employee because that employee's spouse could not find employment in the area.	41.6	17.5	40.9
My organization may give entry level couples an opportunity to work together, but after that, they're on their own.	16.3	38.6	45.1
If any of the above rules apply, they can be waived by higher authority.	18.4	19.7	61.8
Spouses can be hired, and they are treated just like any other employees.	76	14.9	9

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